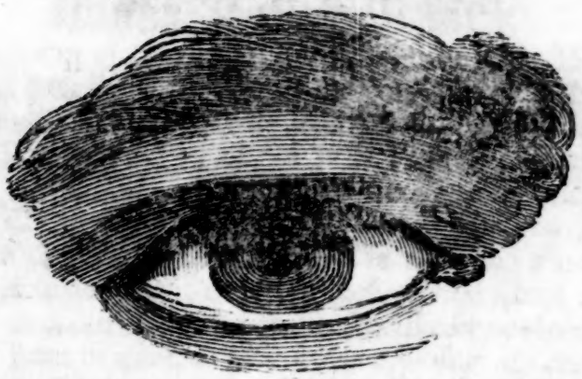


THE OBSERVER.

NEW-YORK:

SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 9, 1809.

ON THE WISDOM OF AIMING AT PERFECTION.

BY KNOX.

THE infirmity of human nature is a topic on which the profligate love to enlarge. They are apt to deduce an argument from it no less injurious than fallacious. They infer from the concession that man is naturally weak and corrupt, that the precepts of strict morality are utterly useless, and that they originate in one of the principal arguments of human imbecility,---an ill-grounded pride.

Man is, indeed, a weak creature ; but he is also an improveable creature. He has strong passions ; but he has also strong powers within him to counteract their operation. He possesses reason ; and his happiness certainly depends upon the voluntary use or abuse, the neglect or the exertion, of this noble faculty.

It seems probable that many who urge the inefficacy of philosophical and moral precepts are only endeavouring to excuse their own indolence. They who feel themselves little inclined to correct their misconduct are very solicitous to persuade themselves that they are unable, from the inherent and general imbecility of human nature.

Indeed, wherever human creatures are found, there are also to be found vice and misery. Nor is this appearance only among the rude and the illiterate, but among those who are adorned with all the arts of human knowledge. Observation affords many examples of those, who, after having recommended virtue in the most forcible manner, with all the appearance of sincerity, have at last fallen into the disgrace and wretchedness of singular profligacy. Contrary to their conviction, their interest, their character, to all that seemed estimable in their own eyes, they have descended from the towering heights of virtue into the lowest abysses of vice.

Such instances do, indeed, sometimes occur, and they are usually blazoned and exaggerated by triumphant delinquency. In many cases of degeneracy it is probable that the appearances of virtue were insincere. But allowing, what indeed the uniform decisions of observation, reason, and religion, clearly declare, that human nature is weak in the extreme, yet I would draw a different conclusion from that which is deduced by the patrons of libertinism.

The nature of man is extremely infirm, it is granted ; and, therefore, I argue, let every effort be made to acquire new strength and resolution. It cannot be said that the endeavour must of necessity be abortive ; it cannot be said that we have not natural incitements sufficient to encourage a rigorous attempt. We have nice sensibilities of moral rectitude, we have a natural love of excellence, we have intellectual powers capable of infinite improvement, we have precepts innumerable ; and, to the honour of human nature, let it be added, that examples also greatly abound.

Many individuals who enrolled themselves among the severer sects of ancient philosophy have exhibited most animating proofs of the strength of human nature. It is not to be supposed that they possessed faculties more in number, or more perfect in their kind, than the present race. But they loved excellence, and they believed that they were capable of it. That belief operated most favourably on their exertion. They succeeded in their attempts, and stand forth among mankind like colossal statues amid a collection of images less than the life.

I hope, therefore, it will be rendering an effectual service to mankind, if I can revive this belief of the possibility of great advances towards perfection among the gay and the dissipated. Philosophers have already received it ; but philosophers are to the rest of mankind what a drop of water is to an ocean. The pretended philosophers are numerous indeed ; but they commonly divulge opinions which tend to degrade and vilify human nature. Popularity seems to be more their object than the sublime satisfaction of discovering and communicating useful truth. But, were the generality of mankind convinced that they are capable of arriving at high degrees of excellence, and consequently led to aspire at it, moral evil would certainly decrease, and society assume a fairer appearance. Much misery and much evil of all kinds will always be in it, during this sublunary state ; but that share of it which is obstinately and presumptuously occasioned by our own folly may certainly be removed when that folly is corrected.

What is done in the works of art may often be effected in morals. Were a musical instrument to be placed in the hands of a peasant who had never heard or seen one, and were he told that he might, if he were to attend to it, call forth sounds from it which would delight every hearer, he would not be induced by any argument to believe the possibility of it. Yet let him regularly learn and practice a due time, and he will arrive at a degree of skill, which, though far from perfection, will appear miraculous on comparrison with his original inability. So in life, if you inform your disciple that he is able to reach a great degree of excellence, and urge him to the attempt, he will infallibly make great advances, and improve to his own astonishment. But indulge his natural indolence, timidity, or despair, by expatiating on the irremediable weakness of human nature, and you effectually preclude even his endeavours, and add to his natural imbecility by paralysing his original vigour.

In the works of art, in sculpture, and in painting, in the subordinate operations of mechanical ingenuity, to what perfection does the hand of man attain ? When a savage sees a watch, he adores it as a god. No earnestness of assertion would convince him that it was the work of a creature in all respects like himself, except in acquired dexterity. And can man improve himself so highly in the manual arts, in science, and in the productions of taste, and be unable to arrive at real

and solid improvement in the finest art and the noblest science, the art and the science of conducting life? Half the attention and the constancy which is displayed in acquiring skill in an occupation by which money is to be gained, if bestowed on the melioration of the morals, would usually produce a most laudable character.

The state of things is so constituted, that labour, well bestowed and proberly directed, always produces a valuable effect. That it should find its reward, even in this world, seems to be the decree of Providence. Away, then, with the philosophy which increases the weakness of our nature by representing it as insuperable. Our personal excellence and happiness, our friends and our country, are greatly interested in exploding the pusillanimous doctrine. We shall, indeed, often fall; but let us rise undejected. Our failings will be great, but great also may be our virtues. At least, according to an old and just observation, by aiming at absolute perfection we shall approach it much more nearly than if we sit down inactive through a pusillanimous despair.

The modern philosophers and their disciples, while they assert the inefficacy of philosophy, of moral precepts, and of religious influence, are inclined to maintain, that the effect which these only pretend to produce may be actually produced by the principle of *modern honour*. I would only, in reply to their insinuation, ask them these questions: Who are the persons who openly and proudly commit deeds at which the child of nature, even the savage, would shudder; who is guilty of the meanest, cruellest seduction; who wears a sword ready to plunge it into the heart of his dearest friend for a trifling provocation; who is ready to glory in breaking the peace of conjugal life, and ruining a family for the gratification of lust or vanity? Unerring experience replies, Men of Honour; all, all, honourable men.

From such delusion let the untainted mind of youth hasten to escape. To religon and morality let it fly for solid comfort, and for those assistances which can alone repair the ruins that have been made by the fall of Adam in the glorious fabric of human nature. With our utmost endeavours, both reason and divinity inform us we shall be at last greatly defective. Whither, then, shall we fly for succour? whither shall we turn to find that which shall support our weakness, and supply our defects? Philosophy is often vain, but religion never. To the Deity we must have recourse, who will certainly strengthen us by his grace, and pardon our involuntary failures, of his infinite mercy.

FROM ESPRIELLA'S LETTERS ON QUACKERY.

ANY scientific discovery is immediately seized by some of the numerous adventurers in this country, who prey upon the follies and the miseries of their fellow-creatures. The most eminent quack of the last generation was a Doctor Graham, who tampered with electricity in a manner too infamous to be reported; and for which he ought to have received the most exemplary public punishment. This man was half mad; and his madness at last, contrary to the usual process, got the better of his knavery. His latest method of practice was something violent; it was to bury his patients up to the chin in fresh mould. J--- saw half a score of them exhibited in this manner for a shilling: a part of the exhibition was to see them perform afterwards upon shoulders of mutton, to prove that when they rose from the grave they were as devouring as the grave itself. The ope-

ration lasted four hours; they suffered, as might be seen in their countenances, intensely from cold for the first two, during the third they grew warmer, and in the last perspired profusely, so that when they were taken out the mould reeked like a new dunghill. Sailors are said to have practised this mode of cure successfully for the scurvy. The Doctor used sometimes to be buried himself for the sake of keeping his patients company: one day, when he was in this condition, a farmer emptied a watering-pot upon his head to make him grow. When J--- saw him he was sitting up to the neck in a bath of warm mud, with his hair powdered and in full dress. As he was haranguing upon the excellent state of health which he enjoyed from the practice of earth bathing, as he called it, J--- asked him, Why then, if there was nothing the matter with him, he sate in the mud? The question puzzled him. Why, he said,---why---it was---it was---it was to show the people that it did no harm,---that it was quite innocent---that it was very agreeable: and then brightening his countenance with a smile at the happiness of the thought, he added, "It gives me, sir, a skin as soft as the feathers of Venus's dove." This man lived upon vegetables, and delighted in declaiming against the sin of being carnivorous, and the dreadful effects of making the stomach a grave and charnel house for slaughtered bodies. Latterly he became wholly an enthusiast, would madden himself with ether, run out into the streets, and strip himself to clothe the first beggar whom he met.

MAXIMS.

Errors and mistakes, however gross in matters of opinion, if they be sincere, are to be pitied, but not punished, nor laughed at. The blindness of the understanding is as much to be pitied, as the blindness of the eyes; and it is neither laughable, nor criminal, for a man to lose his way in either case. Charity bids us endeavour to set him right, by arguments and persuasions; but charity, at the same time, forbids us either to punish or ridicule his misfortune. Every man seeks for truth, but God only knows who has found it. It is unjust to persecute, and absurd to ridicule people for their several opinions, which they cannot help entertaining on the conviction of their reason. It is he who tells, or acts a lie, that is guilty, and not he who honestly and sincerely believes the lie.

The object of all public worships in the world is the same; it is that great eternal Being who created every thing. The different manners of worship are, by no means, subjects of ridicule. Each sect thinks his own the best; and I know no infallible judge in this world, to decide which is the best. There was a time when I thought it impossible for the most honest man in the world to be saved out of the pale of the church of England; not considering that matters of opinion do not depend on the will; and that it is as natural, and as allowable, that another person should differ in opinion from me, as that I should differ from him. If we be both sincere, we are both blameless, and ought to have a mutual indulgence for each other.

HUMANITY.

Humanity is the particular characteristic of great minds; little vicious minds abound with anger and revenge; and are incapable of feeling the exalted pleasure of forgiving their enemies.

WOMAN.

BY CRABBE.

Mr. LEDYARD, as quoted by M. PARKE, in his travels into Africk.

"To a woman I never addressed myself, in the language of decency and friendship, without receiving a decent and friendly answer. If I was hungry or thirsty, wet or sick, they did not hesitate, like men, to perform a generous action: in so free and kind a manner did they contribute to my relief, that if I was dry, I drank the sweetest draught; and if hungry, I ate the coarsest morsel with a double relish."

PLACE the White-Man on Africk's coast,
Whose swarthy sons in blood delight,
Who of their scorn to Europe boast,
And paint their very dæmons white.

There while the sterner sex disdains
To soothe the woes they cannot feel,
Woman will strive to heal his pains,
And weep for those she cannot heal:
Her's is warm Pity's sacred glow;
From all her stores, she bears a part,
And bids the spring of Hope reflow,
That languish'd in the fainting heart.

"What though so pale his haggard face,
So sunk and sad his looks," she cries;
"And far unlike our nobler race,
With crisped locks and rolling eyes;
Yet Misery marks him of our kind,
We see him lost, alone, afraid;
And pangs of body, griefs in mind,
Pronounce him Man, and ask our aid."

"Perhaps in some far distant shore,
There are who in these forms delight;
Whose milky features please them more,
Than ours of jet thus burnish'd bright;
Of such may be his weeping Wife,
Such children for their Sire may call,
And if we spare his ebbing life,
Our kindness may preserve them all."

Thus her compassion Woman shows,
Beneath the Line, her acts are these;
Nor the wide waste of Lapland-snows,
Can her warm flow of pity freeze:
"From some sad land the stranger comes,
Where joys, like ours, are never found;
Let's soothe him in our happy homes,
Where Freedom sits, with Plenty crown'd.

" 'Tis good the fainting soul to cheer,
To see the famish'd stranger fed;
To milk for him the mother-deer,
To smooth for him the furry bed.
The Powers above, our Lapland bless,
With good no other people know;
T' enlarge the joys that we possess,
By feeling those that we bestow!"

Thus in extremes of cold and heat,
Where wandering Man may trace his kind;
Wherever Grief and Want retreat,
In Woman they compassion find;
She makes the female breast her seat,
And dictates mercy to the mind.
Man may the sterner virtues know,
Determin'd justice, truth severe;
But female hearts with pity glow,
And Woman holds affliction dear;
For guiltless woes her sorrows flow,
And suffering vice compels her tear;
'Tis her's to soothe the ills below,
And bid life's fairer views appear;
To Woman's gentle kind we owe,
What comforts and delights us here;
They its gay hopes on youth bestow,
And care they soothe and age they cheer.

THE WIDOW.

BY SOUTHEY.

COLD was the night wind, drifting fast the snows fell,
Wide were the downs and shelterness and naked,
When a poor Wanderer struggled on her journey
Weary and way-sore.

Drear were the downs, more dreary her reflections;
Cold was the night wind, colder was her bosom!
She had no home, the world was all before her,
She had no shelter.

Fast o'er the bleak heath rattling drove a chariot,
" Pity me!" feebly cried the poor Night Wanderer.
" Pity me, strangers! lest with cold and hunger
Here I should perish.

" Once I had friends,---but they have all forsook me!
Once I had parents,---they are now in Heaven!
I had a home once---I had once a husband---
Pity me, Strangers!

" I had a home once---I had once a husband---
I am a Widow poor and broken hearted!"
Loud blew the wind, unheard was her complaining,
On drove the chariot.

On the cold snows she laid her down to rest her;
She heard a horseman, " Pity me!" she groaned out;

Loud was the wind, unheard was her complaining,
On went the horseman.
Worn out with anguish, toil and cold and hunger,
Down sunk the Wanderer, sleep had seiz'd her senses;
There, did the Traveller find her in the morning,
GOD had releas'd her.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

By a late arrival at Philadelphia, in 54 days from Dunkirk, news is brought of the operations of the French and Austrian armies. The French have been, in every attack, victorious; and during a continual succession of engagements, which lasted for several days, the Austrian forces have become almost totally destroyed. The corps of the Arch-Duke John is said to have been cut off, and compelled to throw down their arms, and the Arch-Duke Charles completely defeated. Bonaparte was already within the Austrian territories, and it seemed probable would soon oblige her Emperor to submit to any terms he thought proper to impose.

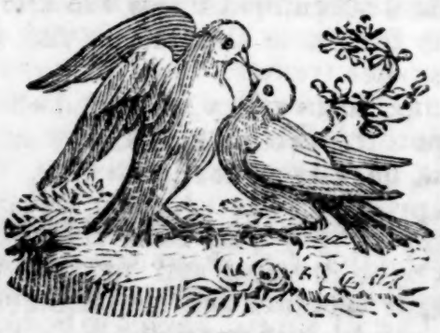
Thomas Pearce, formerly commander of the ship Sally, which arrived some months ago at Liverpool with a cargo of tobacco, and who, since his return to Philadelphia has been taken, and in custody of the Marshal of the district of Pennsylvania, on process issued for a violation of the embargo laws; and contrived last Saturday to elude the vigilance of one of the Marshal's men and make his escape, was retaken near Cape May, and is now safely lodged in the jail in Walnut-street.

It appears that after Pearce crossed the Delaware, a horse and chair were waiting for him, and it is more than probable, had not some mismanagement taken place, he would have been at sea.

The United States are making daily advances in those arts which are connected with the manufacture of Cotton and Wool. A Mr. M' Bride of Tennessee has invented a Machine, which gins, cards, and spins, "by one continued operation." The fly shuttle begins to be used in our common looms. Mr. Cooper of the town of Lebanon, Dauphin county state of Pennsylvania, has obtained a patent from the President of the U. S for a Double Loom, of an entirely new construction. Such looms are already in use in Great Britain---of which there is a description in the 'Register of Arts,' printed in London. Mr C's loom is so constructed, "that one person may weave two pieces of cloth, of any size usual on a common loom. It makes a border on all sides of the cloth. In the space of twelve hours, 40 yards of linen have been woven, the yard of which counted 2 doz. and 7 cuts to the pound. The patentee engages to weave about 30 yards every day in the week. But a much more important improvement in looms has been effected at Exeter, in the state of N. Hampshire. The Machine is called a Water Loom, from its being put in motion by that power----this sort of improvement is worthy of notice. The arts begin to assume their finest finish, when the inanimate powers of nature are called in to their assistance. It is then that water, and wind, and steam, are made to take the place of the hands and muscles of man----the expence of labour is almost superceded---and those labour saving machines, start forth, which enable one man to do the work of many.

The water loom is the first great step that we have seen in the art of weaving. The sister branches of ginning, of carding and spinning, have long since surpassed it, by means of the various engines which have been invented for these purposes. It may now be expected, that the business of weaving will recover that just proportion of improvement to which it is entitled, with its sister arts. This Water Loom is said to weave excellent Duck from Cotton, instead of Hemp---and the owner has in consequence " engaged to furnish canvas for a number of vessels now fitting out. It is capable of weaving bedticks, and every kind of figure, including velvets, corduroys, &c. In a former letter, the owner had observed, that a woman or child might tend two looms----but he is now convinced on further trial, that an active woman may tend four. It weaves yarn from 4 to 13, and works as well in high numbers as in low."----This account is given by Mr. Massey of Exeter. *Richmond Enquirer.*

On the late anniversary of our independence, the Cincinnati Society of Pennsylvania passed a resolution to appropriate the sum of five hundred dollars, to erect an unornamented monument to the memory of Major General ANTHONY WAYNE, formerly a member of the society, and at the time of his decease commander in chief of the armies of the United States.



MARRIED,

On Thursday evening, by the Rev. Bishop Moore, Mr. George W. Gosman, to Miss Harriet Sherred, daughter of Jacob Sherred, Esq.

Subscribers to the Observer, who have been neglected by the carriers, can have any deficiency supplied by sending to the Office.

BILL OF MORTALITY,

from the 24th June to the 1st July.

	Years.		Years.
Sarah M'Ready	34	Samuel Whitman	34
Jane Center	34	Margaret Rock	40
William Beekman	22	Hugh Brown	55
Lawrence Wiggins	40	Sarah Hagerman	57
John Gillespie	26	James Ferguson	64
Robert Beaty	30	Sarah Towt	68
John V. Borland	1	Samuel Beaty	3
Mary Tilyou	1	Ann Shilman	2
Charles Cavenagh	41	Thomas Fenagan	35
James M'Combs	37	William Benham	45
Margaret Anderson	36	Fred. Tawbert	64
James Concklin	20	James Villesy	1
John Rapejay	20	Mary Godby	8 m
S. Stephens' ch.	1	Jacob Day's ch.	9 d
George Dieas	2 m	Nancy Arden	10 d
Simon Philips	6 m	John M'Deeds	10 d

Printed and published by W. Elliot, corner of Wall and William-sts: sold also at Mr. Sinclair's book-store, No. 259, Broadway.